

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2464

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS:

SUBJ: INDIAN YOUTH LEADER STIRS GSL IRE

PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S DAUGHTER, SUNETHRA RUPASINGHE, CAME TO SEE AMBASSADOR MARCH 26 IN HIGH DUDGEON AND SOME EMBARRASSMENT. SOURCE OF HER EMBARRASSMENT WAS BHIM SINGH, SECRETARY GENERAL OF INTERNATIONAL RELGATIONS COMMITTEE OF INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS, WHO HAD VISITED SRI LANKA EARLIER THIS MONTH.

2. ACCORDING SUNETHRA,SHE AND HUSBAND KUMAR MET BHIM SINGH DURING THEIR VISIT TO DELHI LAT YEAR EN ROUTE TO MIDDLE EAST AT WHICH TIME HE HAD DISCUSSED POSSIBLITY INAUGURATING YOUTH EXCHANGES BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA. BHIM SINGH HAD INDICATED HIS DESIRE VISIT SRI LANKA TO FURTHER EXPLORE EXCHANGE POSSIBILITIES AND DID SO ON INVITATION RUPASINGHES WITH WHOM HE STAYED IN COLOMBO. (SUNETHRA IS GSL COORDINATING SECRETARY; KUMAR IS DIRECTOR,NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE COUNCIL).

3. AT HIS REQUEST SUNETHRA ARRANGED FOR BHIM

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SINGH TO MEET WIT HER MOTHER AND MEETING DEVELOPED

INTO INTERVIEW WITH BHIM SINGH TAKING NOTES. THESE NOTES WERE REVIEWED BY SINETHRA FOLLOWING MEETING AND WERE UNEXCEPTIONABLE. SHE THEREFORE HAD BEEN ASTOUNDED TO RECEIVE BATCH OF NEWS CLIPPINGS FROM INDIAN PRESS STATING THAT DURING BHIM SINGH'S INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER SHE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE THREATENED TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES OVER DIEGO GARCIA ISSUE AND TO HAVE FAVORED ORGANIZING SRI LANKA AND INDIAN YOUTH TO PROTEST AGAINST DIEGO.

4. ACCORDING SUNETHRA, STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO PRIME MINISTER WERE MADE OUT OF PURE CLOTH AND PM AT NO TIME DISCUSSED UNITED STATES IN THESE TERMS. SHE SUGGESTED BHIM SINGH WAS USING INTERVIEW TO PUSH SOVIET-INDIAN LINE AND SAID SHE WAS FURIOUS AT HIM FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HER AND HER HUSBAND AND HER MOTHER. SHE HAD INSTRUCTED GSL DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER JAYAKODY IN NEW DELHI TO DENY TO INDIAN PRESS THAT PM HAD MADE ANY SUCH STATEMENTS. JAYAKODY WAS ALSO INSTRUCTED TO PROTEST BHIM SINGH'S DISTORTED INTERVIEW TO PRESIDENT OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND TO CHIEFS OF ITS YOUTH SECTION.

5. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED APPRECIATION TO MRS. RUPA-SINGHE FOR CLARIFYING BHIM SINGH'S INTERVIEWS. HE SAID EMBASSY HAD ALREADY RECEIVED ONE CLIPPING FROM INDIAN PRESS RE PRIME MINISTER'S REPORTED THREAT TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WHICH WAS INDEED SURPRISING BECAUSE PM HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY VOICED SUCH SENTIMENTS, EITHER PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY. ON CONTRARY, SHE HAD HANDLED DIEGO ISSUE WITH GREAT CIRCUMSPECTION. AMBASSADOR ALSO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION TO TXS. RUPASINGHE FOR HER PROMPT EFFORTS TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT VIA INSTRUCTIONS TO JAYAKODY.

6. COMMENT: SUNETHRA'S DIRECT APPROACH TO AMBASSADOR, WHICH SHE SAID HAD BEEN MADE AT SUGGESTION OF HER MOTHER AND FOREIGN OFFICE, REVEALS GSL'S DESIRE TO AVOID ANY UNNECESSARY OFFENSE TO USG. IT ALSO REFLECTS BLSIRE OF RUPASINGHES, WHO ARE CONSIDERED TO EXERCISE LEFT-WING INFLUENCE WITHIN GOVERNMENT, TO DIVORCE THEMSELVES FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR ERSTWHILE FRIEND AND HOATE GUEST. ADDITIONALLY, CEYLONSE SENSITIVITY RE BHIM SINGH'S STATEMENTS MAY RELATE TO AMBASSADOR'S RECENT PROTEST TO PRIME MINISTER ON CIA ALLEGATIONS MADE BY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AND INTERNAL TRADE ILANGRATNE (COLOMBO 0740).

7. FOR NEW DELHI: WE WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING HOW MUCH PRESS PALLY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO BHIM SINGH INTERVIEW

AND WHETHER PRESS HAS ISSUED ANY DENIALS.
VAN HOLLEN

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